

MANUEL FERNÁNDEZ-GÖTZ, *Identity and Power. The Transformation of Iron Age Societies in Northeast Gaul*. Amsterdam Archaeological Studies volume 21. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2014. € 89.00. ISBN 978-9-08964597-5. 298 pages.

Manuel Fernández-Götz's book, published in 2014, is drawn from the thesis he wrote at the University of Kiel, Germany, under the direction of Dirk Krauß (State Heritage Board Baden-Württemberg, Germany) and Gonzalo Ruiz Zapatero (Complutense University of Madrid), which he defended in 2012. It is an essay on social archaeology in Iron Age continental Europe that covers a vast geographical expanse stretching over the Moselle and the Middle Rhine regions and a similarly vast time span that extends from the Early Iron Age to the period of Romanisation. His approach is clearly anthropological in nature. It offers insight into the ways in which the social identity of human communities was created, as well as into how that identity developed over time and how it spread geographically, with particular reference to terms of ethnicity, gender and age group. Thus, the book effectively deals with 'signs of collective identity' much in the way archaeologists identify them in finds and historical sources. But it also, and perhaps mainly, deals with 'power relations', such as those that are manifest in the interactions between different social classes and different social categories: men and women, young and old, the powerful and the dependent, nobles and peasants, and so on.

The book is divided into three major parts of unequal length. The first two chapters constitute a methodological and theoretical introduction, in which the author examines different kinds of social identity and the ways in which power functions within them. He approaches these as an anthropologist or a sociologist would, and as archaeologists tend to apply them to their findings. His aim is to establish the conceptual framework for what he calls an "archaeology of identities". In the second part (chapter 3), the author looks at the various levels of socio-political organisation in the Iron Age communities that can be reconstructed on the basis of this approach, levels that range from the local scale, that of families, to that of peoples or federations of peoples. In the third part, the largest of the three, the author adopts a diachronic perspective to examine the evolution of Iron Age socio-political organisation, from the isolated communities of the Hallstatt period to the *civitates* that were incorporated into the provincial Roman Empire (chapters 4 through 9). The rise of Celtic *oppida* is naturally a major aspect of the author's reconstitution of the "cultural history" of Iron Age societies in continental Europe.

The synthesis of data Manuel Fernández-Götz has effected in writing *Identity and Power* is highly impressive. I shall leave the critique of the author's interpretations to those with expertise in this field. I prefer to look at the place this important work is certain to occupy in European Iron Age archaeology. It is striking to note that while the data analysed by the author are essentially the product of French and German archaeology, the ideas and the interpretations are rooted in Anglo-American scholarship. There is even reference, virtually mandatory in British and American academic circles, to the "stars" of French Theory: Michel Foucault, for the way in which power functions, and Pierre Bourdieu, in regard to the creation and reproduction of elite classes. Moreover, the book was published in English, in the Netherlands, which is recognised for its openness to thought from abroad and has been known since Voltaire's day for its intellectual broad-mindedness.

I have no desire to launch a debate, but I believe we all, wherever we stand on this, need to try to understand why French and German scholars have remained, whatever people say, essentially closed to research carried out in the English-speaking world. It is rather paradoxical that while the theoretical reflections of the British and the Americans draw largely on the work of Europeans, especially the French, continental European archaeology has not produced intellectual figures of as

high a caliber as their Anglo-American counterparts. It is important to bear in mind that until the outbreak of World War I, the sociological and anthropological interpretation of archaeological findings was a richly productive branch of continental European scholarship. In fact, North American anthropology and archaeology were founded by scholars of German extraction, like Franz Boas and Alfred Kroeber. It was in France that members of Émile Durkheim's school of sociological thought effectively opened sociology and anthropology to prehistoric times and archaeology. Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert formed a remarkably successful tandem. They shared the task of unifying research methods, with Mauss focusing on archaic societies still functioning in contemporary times and Hubert on ancient ones. MAUSS and his famous work *Essai sur le Don* (*L'Année Sociologique* 1, 1923/24, 30–186) are still remembered, while Hubert's name has fallen into oblivion. How is it that this coupling of anthropology and archaeology has not taken hold in Continental Europe? As hard as it is to accept, we need to recognise the decline of European thought, visible, here, in archaeology, and which coincides with the “dark hours” of the 20th century. We have never fully recovered from this catastrophe, which explains why the ideas being generated are so dominantly the product of Anglo-American research. It is useless to hole up in some ivory tower and try to convince ourselves that whereas our findings are scientifically founded, those produced by others are not; the facts speak for themselves.

I would like to come back to Manuel Fernández-Götz's *Identity and Power* to offer a bit of what is surely unfair criticism given the immensity of the undertaking. In my opinion, the book should have presented a more clearly European perspective towards the anthropological and sociological interpretation of archaeological findings in proto-historical continental Europe. Fernández-Götz, who lives between three cultures – German, Spanish and now English –, is still young, with many years ahead of him to reflect on this. Let me be clear: The approach he has taken in this book is based on an implicit postulate of Anglo-American scholarship, namely that archaeological evidence is naturally *interpretable* in anthropological and sociological terms, or, as the well-known saying has it, “archaeology is anthropology or it is nothing”. Yet we know there exist numerous social and cultural phenomena that do not find their way into material remains. We know, too, that the material remains of the past are transformed by the various processes of fossilisation and altered by numerous taphonomic transformations. Thus, the issue that needs to be addressed first is that of the material limits to interpreting archaeological finds. That, in my opinion, is an area Fernández-Götz does not examine thoroughly enough.

And this, I believe, offers us a chance to make our voice heard in a useful and constructive way in a discussion that is now clearly international and in fact worldwide. There exists, both in France and in Germany, a powerful tradition of phenomenological thought that runs from Husserl and Heidegger to Merleau-Ponty and Ricœur. Interpreting archaeological findings necessarily involves phenomenological considerations. Yet while there exists a phenomenology of History (in particular in the writings of Paul Ricœur) there is no phenomenology of archaeology, or at least no archaeology sufficiently informed by phenomenological thought. This could be – in fact, it should be – Europe's trademark. What we do cannot be limited to accumulating and describing data. It behooves us to reflect upon our finds as well. That is the path that *Identity and Power* invites us to follow, that of *discussing* Iron Age archaeological finds and *debating* their interpretation. And for that we should be grateful to Manuel Fernández-Götz and congratulate him.

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